

**Town Council**  
**5<sup>th</sup> October 2020 at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillors: T McMahon Chairman  
D Abbott  
J Carroll  
C Copleston  
Y Farrell  
S Goodchild  
D Jones  
M S Kennedy  
R Morgan  
A Slough  
S Thorne  
K Wattingham

Officers: Clare Evans Town Clerk  
Louise Senior Head of Democratic Services

Public: 2

Absent: Councillors: D Dixon-Wilkinson

**11359 APOLOGIES**

None.

**11360 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None.

**11361 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

None.

**11362 MINUTES**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

**Resolved: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 24th August 2020 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

**11363 COMMITTEE MINUTES**

To receive the minutes of the following committees and consider any recommendations contained therein

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Corporate Services Committee	2 <sup>nd</sup> March and 8 <sup>th</sup> June 2020 Members are specifically referred to the following;
	11186 Local Govt Pension Scheme: Statement of Local Discretion
	11187 Bad Debts and Late payment policy
	11189 Disciplinary Policy
	11190 Grievance Policy
	11233 Sickness Policy
	11234 Health & Safety at Work Policy

Cllr Jones highlighted that the Sickness Policy had already been approved at Town Council on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

Community Services Committee	22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2020
Environment & Leisure Committee	1 <sup>st</sup> June 2020
Planning Committee	6 <sup>th</sup> July, 27 <sup>th</sup> July, 17 <sup>th</sup> August and 7 <sup>th</sup> September 2020
Town Partnership Committee	28 <sup>th</sup> January 2020.

To receive the minutes of the following sub committee and consider any recommendations contained therein

Office Provisions Sub Committee	None to present.
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To receive the minutes of the following working group and consider any recommendations contained therein

Proposed New Cemetery Working Group	2 <sup>nd</sup> September 2019.
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**Resolved: To receive the Minutes detailed above and to approve the recommendations contained therein as follows;**

- *11186 Local Govt Pension Scheme: Statement of Local Discretion*
- *11187 Bad Debts and Late payment policy*
- *11189 Disciplinary Policy*
- *11190 Grievance Policy*
- *11233 Sickness Policy*
- *11234 Health & Safety at Work Policy*

## 11364 TOWN MAYOR ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members received a verbal report on events that had been attended by the Town Mayor.

Members were advised that a church coffee morning at All Saints had been attended and the renovations to the pathway had improved accessibility. The Aylesbury Town Mayors quiz had been attended, and Cllr McMahon came in at second place, members were advised that it had been enjoyable to speak to other councillors throughout the evening.

## 11365 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS & ON TRAINING SESSIONS ATTENDED

Members provided verbal reports from meetings they had attended of outside organisations or from training courses they had attended on behalf of the Council.

Cllr Kennedy attended a virtual meeting of the Houghton Hall Park Steering Group. Members were advised that the café had not been open as the current provider was no longer managing the café. CBC were working on securing a local provider. Police patrols under Operation Hana had positively impacted problem areas. Increased signage had been placed around the park targeting joggers, dog walkers and cyclists encouraging cohesive use of the green space.

Cllr Thorne attended the Dial-a-Ride AGM, members were advised that with the continuation of government restrictions, consideration may need to be given to staffing levels.

Cllr Farrell attended a meeting of the Memorial Hall; the car park resurfacing was nearing completion. The AGM was to be held Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2020 and members were advised that both a new secretary and a new treasurer would be appointed and work had been completed to update the information on the website.

Cllr Jones attended BATPC meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020, which considered a report on Code of Conduct with discussion around sanctions and the need for respect. Members were advised that income had been affected due to the lack of training being offered. The BATPC AGM was to be held on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2020.

Cllr McMahon had completed two online training courses, Building Back Communities and Sustainability, details of which would be shared with members. Members were advised that many of the items discussed had been included in the Houghton Regis Town Council 4-year vision, however, it was acknowledged that work had been delayed by Covid-19. Also attended was the Beds Police Priority Setting meeting.

## **11366 INTERNAL AUDIT, PLANNING AND REVIEW**

A system of internal control was designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than eliminate all risk or failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives. It thus provided a reasonable, not absolute, assurance of effectiveness. A system of prioritisation therefore pertained.

It was the responsibility of Council to determine the scope of audit, without undue influence from the internal auditor, to ensure his/her independence and that planning, and reporting access was effective and direct

Members received the current policy, only slightly adjusted to reflect a change in numbering in the council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. The policy had been reviewed and it was considered that it remained suitable and fit for purpose.

Members also considered competitive quotes for internal audit services for 2020/21. Members were advised that the quotes were all from suitable qualified companies who were independent of the council, thus all potential providers met the internal auditor eligibility criteria.

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One quote was from the internal auditor for 2019/20 (and the previous 4 years or so). Members considered whether they would like to change internal auditor in line with the general good practice measure of changing internal auditor on a reasonably regular basis.

Given the significant changes in the working environment members felt that it would be more prudent to remain with the previous internal auditor for 2020/21. Members requested an earlier report on internal audit providers for the financial year 2021/22.

**Resolved:**

- 1. To approve the Internal Audit Planning, Reporting & Review Policy.**
- 2. To appoint Company A, Greenbiro, as the councils internal auditor for 2020/21.**

### **11367 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY**

The Equality Act 2010 came into force in October 2010. The legislation covered a prescribed set of protected characteristics including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

It also covered prohibited conduct including discrimination, adjustments for disabled persons, victimisation and harassment; services and public functions; premises; employment; contracts; and, advancement of equality. The latter provision specified a public sector equality duty, which applied equally to town and parish councils.

Members received the current policy. The policy had been reviewed and it was considered that it remained suitable and fit for purpose.

**Resolved:**      **To approve the Equality and Diversity Policy.**

### **11368 CHRISTMAS OPENING HOURS**

At this meeting of Town Council members usually receive a report on office opening hours over the Christmas period. Due to Covid-19 the office reception was open for reduced hours, it was hoped to increase reception hours over the next few weeks but this was reliant on national guidance and instruction.

Assuming it was possible to have an office reception, the following Christmas opening hours were suggested:

Thursday 24th December – Open 9am to 1pm  
Friday 25th December – Bank Holiday  
Monday 28th December – Bank Holiday  
Tuesday 29th December – Closed  
Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> December – Closed  
Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> December – Closed  
Friday 1<sup>st</sup> January – Bank Holiday  
Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January – Normal office hours resume

Telephone services would remain, the grounds staff would check the play areas and pavilions on 29th December and 31<sup>st</sup> December and staff would be on call should an emergency situation arise. Members were reminded that the town council does not provide any core front line services such as social services, housing and highways. These were provided by the principal authority.

**Resolved: To approve the office opening hours between Christmas and New Year as follows:**

**Thursday 24th December – Open 9am to 1pm**

**Friday 25th December – Bank Holiday**

**Monday 28th December – Bank Holiday**

**Tuesday 29th December – Closed**

**Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> December – Closed**

**Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> December – Closed**

**Friday 1<sup>st</sup> January – Bank Holiday**

**Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January December – Normal office hours resume**

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.42pm**

**Dated this 14<sup>th</sup> day of December 2020**

**Chairman**